

ANNUAL TOWN BUDGET AND SPECIAL TOWN MEETING

The Annual Town Budget and Special Town Meeting was called to order by First Selectman Eric Couture at 7:21 PM in the All Purpose Room of the Killingworth Elementary School on May 18, 2026, to consider and act upon the following items of business:

Item 1. To approve the Multi-Year Capital Improvement Plan for Fiscal Year 2027 through Fiscal Year 2036.

Item 2. To consider, discuss, and vote upon: i) an appropriation in the amount of \$4,710,000, which includes a previously approved appropriations in the amount of \$2,158,845 plus an additional appropriation in the amount of \$2,551,155 for the cost of various capital projects as set forth in more detail in the text of the resolution, including all repairs, alterations, improvements and architectural, engineering and other fees and costs associated with such improvements, and temporary and permanent financing costs (collectively, the "Appropriation"), and ii) to meet said Appropriation and in lieu of a tax therefor, bonds of the Town be issued pursuant to Chapter 109 of the Connecticut General Statutes, as amended, the Charter of the Town or any other provision of law thereto enabling, in the maximum principal amount of \$4,710,000 or so much thereof as may be necessary after deducting grants or other sources of funds available therefor. The bonds shall be general obligations of the Town and the full faith and credit of the Town shall be pledged to the payment thereof.

The full text of the authorizing resolutions for the project above is on file and open to inspection at the office of the Town Clerk, Town Hall, Route 81, Killingworth, Connecticut for the use of any interested person.

Item 3. To adopt the Budget recommendation of the Board of Finance of Capital Expenditures for the fiscal year July 1, 2026 – June 30, 2027 in the amount of \$2,256,214.

Item 4. To adopt the Budget recommendation of the Board of Finance of an Operating Budget for fiscal year July 1, 2026 – June 30, 2027 in the amount of \$5,911,808.

Item 5. To accept the annual reports from Fiscal Years 2023, 2024, and 2025.

Item 6. To confirm the Selectmen's appointment of James Joseph Duffield (U), Chris Robert Smalley (U) and William Raymond Burley (U) as Killingworth representatives to the Haddam-Killingworth Recreation Authority, for a term to commence upon the confirmation and to continue until June 30, 2027.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited, and emergency exits were reviewed prior to the meeting.

Marcel Couture moved to nominate Elizabeth Disbrow to serve as Moderator; seconded by Annie Stirna. There being no further nominations, Jan O'Sullivan moved nominations be closed; seconded by Jackie Vece. Following voice votes, the motion to close nominations and the motion to elect Elizabeth Disbrow both carried unanimously.

Ms. Disbrow advised that the meeting would be conducted in accordance with Robert's Rules of Order, and reviewed eligibility to vote at the meeting. She requested all speakers first provide their name and address and noted each speaker would be given 3 minutes.

Town Clerk Dawn Rees Mooney read the call of the meeting. Jan O'Sullivan moved, and Daryl Smith seconded, to accept the call. Following a voice vote the motion carried unanimously.

Elizabeth Disbrow requested a motion regarding methods of voting to be used. Ethan Drain made a motion to vote on Items 2, 3, and 4 by paper ballot; seconded by Lauren Blaha. Following a voice vote the motion carried unanimously. Moderator Disbrow advised that voting on the remaining items would be conducted by voice vote.

Eric Couture spoke to the first item on the agenda and made the following motion:

To table the Multi-Year Capital Improvement Plan for FY 2027 through FY 2036.

Seconded by Richard Pleines II.

The First Selectman explained that the MYCIP is not yet finalized due to the addition of late items, and he recommended tabling approval rather than presenting an unclear plan. Fred Dudek

suggested that the audience could not approve the bonding of items that are still unclear. Following this discussion, the motion to table carried with two opposing votes.

First Selectman Couture read the full text of the authorizing resolutions for the bonding project (as attached hereto), summarized as follows:

To Confirm, Ratify and Approve Previous Appropriations in the Amount of \$2,158,845, Authorize an Additional Appropriation of \$2,551,155 for a Total Appropriation of \$4,710,000 and Authorize the Issuance of Bonds in the Amount of \$4,710,000 for Various Capital Projects.

Seconded by Marcel Couture. The First Selectman acknowledged that this is a large sum of money, agreeing that access to the MYCIP could have provided clarity to make this important bonding decision. He went on to explain that bonding is a tool to manage costs and taxes and beat inflation, adding that the Boards of Selectmen and Finance have considered bonding to finance improvements to town facilities and operations for many years. He discussed the current bond rates, lease rates, and escalating costs and summarized that if the Bond Resolution fails, this year's Capital Budget may need to be adjusted significantly downward. Lengthy and detailed discussion followed.

Marcel Couture made a motion to move the question to vote, seconded by Stephanie Izzo. Following a voice vote that was too close to call, a vote by show of hands resulted in a 63% approval, just shy of the required 66% required to move the question to vote.

In depth "question and answer" followed regarding the viable life span of proposed projects for bonding, possible future bonding projects, the cost of issuance of the bond, varying terms of bonding for individual projects, funds already approved vs. funds already appropriated and detailed discussion followed. Individual projects such as chip sealing roads and Transfer Station canopies were detailed and clarified. The group seemed to agree that the town is not ready to approve the bonding project and questioned alternatives.

There being no further discussion, a vote was taken via paper ballot. The motion to authorize the issuance of bonds in the amount of \$4,710,000 was defeated by a margin of YES 49 to NO 126.

First Selectman Couture introduced and made the following motion:

To adopt the Budget recommendation of the Board of Finance of Capital Expenditures for the fiscal year July 1, 2026 – June 30, 2027 in the amount of \$2,256,214.

Seconded by Marcel Couture. First Selectman Couture advised that the Capital Budget was printed on the last page of the budget handout, and detailed two possible outcomes as follows: first, approve the capital budget as recommended and then determine how to fund the total amount of \$2,256,214; or second, reduce the capital budget to an amount closer to the \$675,000 Estimated Annual Transfer from Operating Budget.

Detailed discussion followed regarding reducing and/or eliminating proposed upgrades to various Killingworth parks. John Byrne made a motion to eliminate the Sheldon Park playground renovation expenditure; seconded by David Sack. The First Selectman intervened, explaining that he had already prepared a reduced Capital Budget totalling approximately \$675,000 that could be discussed, rather than going line by line through the recommended Capital Budget. In response, John Byrne requested that his previous motion be withdrawn. There being no objection from the audience, the motion was withdrawn.

Eric Couture made a motion to amend Item 3 of the agenda to accept a reduced Capital Budget including only the high priority expenditures of Fire Company Turnout Gear, Public Works Tri-Axel Roll Off, Chip Sealing, Transfer Station Additional Funds for Canopy Project, IT Upgrades, Revaluation, and Vacation/Sick Payout at Retirement totalling approximately \$675,000.

Seconded by Annie Stirna. In depth discussion of chip sealing in general, as well as its pros and cons, followed. First Selectman Couture confirmed that the expenditures for Parmelee Farm's sugar house, picnic benches and shared harvest garden were not included in this reduced Capital Budget, and discussion addressed the Parmelee funding. There being no further discussion, a voice vote was taken. The motion to amend Item 3 carried with very little dissent.

Following this vote the amended motion to adopt the Budget recommendation of the Board of Finance of Capital Expenditures for the fiscal year July 1, 2026 – June 30, 2027 in the amount of \$675,000 passed by a margin of YES 82 to NO 54.

Eric Couture introduced and made the following motion:

To adopt the Budget recommendation of the Board of Finance of an Operating Budget for fiscal year July 1, 2026 – June 30, 2027 in the amount of \$5,911,808.

Seconded by Bill Kosturko. The First Selectman explained that there were two primary factors driving the increase in the recommended Operating Budget. The first is an doubling of the estimated annual transfer to capital and the second is a \$1 to \$110,000 increase in the PFAS engineering and testing line item. He further explained that the town is legally required by the State of CT to conduct testing at the town campus in the PFAS-affected areas versus simply providing bottled water (as suggested). being no further discussion, a vote was taken via paper ballot and the motion passed by a margin of YES 76 to NO 47.

Mr. Couture introduced and made the following motion:

To accept the annual reports from Fiscal Years 2023, 2024, and 2025.

Seconded by Todd Hajak. Eric couture explained that the town's Annual Report is a bookkeeping item that had fallen behind during COVID, adding that the approval of these three reports brings the reports up to date. There being no discussion, the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Couture introduced and made the following motion:

To confirm the Selectmen's appointment of James Joseph Duffield (U), Chris Robert Smalley (U) and William Raymond Burley (U) as Killingworth representatives to the Haddam-Killingworth Recreation Authority, for a term to commence upon the confirmation and to continue until June 30, 2027.

Seconded by Annie Stirna. The First Selectman explained that this is an annual appointment, the three candidates are members of the town's Park and Recreation Commission and are already serving in this capacity. The audience expressed appreciation for all these volunteers do for Killingworth. There being no discussion, the motion carried unanimously.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:03 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Dawn Rees Mooney, Town Clerk